



NewsRelease

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNOUNCES FIRST DEATH FROM WEST NILE VIRUS IN 2007

SACRAMENTO – Dr. Mark Horton, director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), announced today that West Nile virus (WNV) has claimed the life of an elderly woman in Kern County. She is the first to die this year in California from complications associated with the virus.

“This unfortunate death reminds us that we must take precautions to protect ourselves and our families from mosquito bites. Even though the likelihood of serious illness from West Nile virus is low for most people, all Californians should take every precaution to reduce their risk of exposure,” Horton said.

To date in 2007, WNV activity has been detected in 30 of California’s 58 counties. In addition to the death, seven people have become ill with WNV infections in Kern County and one in San Joaquin County.

WNV also has been detected in 230 dead birds, 182 mosquito samples, two horses, 13 chickens and three squirrels.

California has one of the most comprehensive WNV surveillance and control systems in the United States. In recognition of the key role these systems play in controlling WNV, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger included \$3 million in one-time supplemental funds in his 2006-2007 budget that were recently distributed to 61 local agencies to enhance mosquito control and abatement efforts.

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WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds and tree squirrels.

Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. Individuals 50 years of age and older have a higher chance of getting sick and are more likely to develop serious symptoms when infected with WNV. Recent data also indicate that those with diabetes and/or hypertension are at greatest risk for serious illness.

The most effective ways for individuals to prevent exposure to WNV are:

- Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaradin or oil of lemon eucalyptus, according to label instructions.
- Ensure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.

For more information about WNV and to report dead birds and tree squirrels, visit www.westnile.ca.gov or call toll-free 1-877-WNV-BIRD (968-2473).